The Ballarat Naturalist

Volume 25 No.04

May 2025

Steven Lynch, Director of Conservation, Trust for Nature attended our April meeting as our guest speaker.
Steven spoke of growing up in Birchip, in Victoria's Wimmera Mallee region and of his 20 or so year association with Trust for Nature through his work at Bank Australia in establishing the Bank Australia Conservation Reserve through to his time in the Biodiversity Division at DEECA.

Steven shared that Trust for Nature is one of Australia's oldest conservation organisations established in 1972 under an Act of Parliament in Victoria. This enabled people to contribute permanently to nature conservation by donating land or money to a not-for-profit organisation with a specific focus on private land. In 1978, Trust for Nature developed 'on title agreements' known as conservation covenants as a way to protect native plants and wild-life. These legally binding agreements allow private landholders to conserve natural habitat on their properties in perpetuity.

Government funding and public donations have enabled Trust for Nature to have more than 40 properties which have been converted to conservation reserves covering more than 35,000 hectares. Two of Steven's key responsibilities include Science and Reserves. Trust for Nature has a Statewide Conservation Plan that identifies priority habitats and species on private land for conservation. The Trust currently owns more than 40 conservation properties across Victoria including Mt Elephant which our Club visited in April.

Trust for Nature has acquired these properties thanks to the generosity of our supporters who recognise the importance of conserving native flora and fauna. Some of the reserves are maintained through the generosity, hard work and invaluable local knowledge of volunteer Committees of Management, who meet regularly to conduct on-ground works and hold community events.

Steven shared he is developing a reserves strategy for Trust for Nature which will include the Clarkesdale Bird Sanctuary. Steven is committed to coming back and updating us at a future time.

Report submitted by S Lynch

Item from The Conservation Bulletin. Issue 81 2025 published by Trust for Nature

A safe haven for birds

Clarkesdale Bird Sanctuary , on Wadawurrung Country, is a haven for birds including threatened species like the Grey Goshawk.
In late 2024, Trust for Nature launched an urgent appeal to raise $110,000 for Clarkesdale Bird Sanctuary restoration project.
The success of the appeal meant the Victorian Government tripled the impact of these funds by contributing $217,000 through the BushBank program. This funding came at a crucial time to halt the growth and spread of pine wildings and replace areas of young pines with local trees and shrubs. This year we will be managing a team of contractors to remove the pine wildings and other weeds and working closely with Wadawurrung Traditional Owners who are growing the plants that will restore this vital piece of habitat.
Stay tuned for updates

Clarkesdale 2021

Grey Goshawk

Notes on our Field Trip, Sunday 6th April 2025
To Mt. Elephant and surrounds

On Sunday 6th April 2025, 22 Club members headed for Derrinallum and the Mt. Elephant Reserve. Members met at the Visitor Centre (below) at the base of the scoria cone which dominates the landscape. Our aim was to experience a significant volcanic landscape consisting of Mt. Elephant and surrounding lava plains and lakes. The name Derrinallum is derived from the Wadawurrung name for Mount Elephant, “Djerrinallum”, recorded in the 1800’s meaning “nest of sea swallows or terns”.

Mt. Elephant is a breached scoria cone rising 240 metres above the surrounding volcanic plains with a crater 90 metres deep. It is located in the eastern section of the Kanawinka Geopark which includes the landscapes westward to Mt. Gambier. It has been referred to historically as the "swagman's lighthouse" of Victoria's western district. It is listed on the Register of the National Estate of Australia as "one of the highest and one of the most major scoria cones in the largest homogeneous volcanic plains on Earth."

From Wikipedia, "Scoria cones are small volcanoes with relatively steep sides usually formed as the result of a single major episode of volcanic activity. Lava lakes often form in the centre of scoria cones. If the lava in such a lake breaches the side of the cone, the result is a breached scoria cone, such as Mt. Elephant. The volcano first erupted approximately 184,000 years ago." This has given rise to the landscape features we see today.

Mt Elephant cross-section of surface layers with boulders

The Kanawinka Global Geopark is internationally recognised and gets its name from the geological fault stretching from Portland to Naracoorte in South Australia. Kanawinka is an Aboriginal term

meaning “Land of Tomorrow”. The Kanawinka landscape of south west Victoria and south east South Australia is a contrast of limestone plains, sinkholes, caves, mountains, lava flows and lakes. The area features nearly 400 individual eruption points. Aboriginal people have inhabited this region for probably at least 45,000 years.

According to Mount Elephant Community Management Inc., “Mount Elephant had been privately owned since European settlement until the year 2000 when it became available for sale. The local community rallied, formed a partnership with Trust for Nature and purchased the Mount. Two bushfires in 1944 and 1977 destroyed any vegetation, and rabbits and weeds were causing extensive environmental problems. The Visitor Centre was built with a bequest from local residents Jack and Millie Borbidge, along with funds from the State Government and Corangamite Shire and with local contributions. It was opened on 6th November 2016. With rammed earth wall, and off grid power, the centre is becoming a meeting place and a learning place about natural environment. This includes the volcanic plains, native grasslands, birdlife, lakes, Aboriginal and early European settlement.”

Our group was delighted to have access to the Visitor Centre and its facilities on a very windy day. We were welcomed by Lesley Brown, Treasurer of Mount Elephant Community Management Inc., who gave us a briefing about the history of the Reserve and its significant features. Members took the opportunity to enjoy morning tea, then to tackle a climb up to the crater and beyond.

A typical experience of the climb was written by Emily Noble: “For those who decided to head to the trig point atop Mt. Elephant, it was a wonderfully invigorating, pulse-increasing walk up the side of the crater and around part of its rim in an extremely stiff (but thankfully not chilly) breeze to the trig point. Paul Norquay can proudly claim that he reached it first, but everyone who made it was pleased with the achievement and the 360degree view. A pair of Nankeen kestrels above the Mount (and even below the rim), navigating the tricky breeze as they hunted, was another highlight.”

Walking towards the crater

The crater

The steepest climb was at the upper levels. Derrinallum is rear left

With the wind increasing and our members being blown back down the Mount, it was decided that we would have our lunch in the comfort of the Visitor Centre rather than on the foreshore of Deep Lake as planned.

Following lunch, we proceeded to Deep Lake, a short distance from Derrinallum. We were confronted by a strengthening wind that was quite unpleasant and members stayed briefly to observe the waves, the blue-green algae bloom, and a handful of persistent and resilient birds hanging on to this small natural lake on the volcanic plain.

Mt Elephant and the Field of Stones

Our group then drove along O'Donnell and Heards Roads on the eastern side of Mt. Elephant heading for Lake Tooliorook. We were fascinated by extensive "Fields of Stone" which consisted of vast amounts of stone which presumably had been blasted dramatically from the crater of Mt. Elephant during the eruption, and would include scoria and lava "bombs". This landscape was dramatic and totally different from the Stony-rises which consist of solidified lava flows. The area we drove through showed excellent examples of dry -stone walling and building construction using stone.

Lake Tooliorook is another, but larger, lake on the volcanic plains and closely connected to Mt. Elephant. With increasing winds and an approaching weather change, our time here was constrained.as well. Keen photographers and bird watchers went quickly to work and then we agreed to bring the day's outing to an end and return to Ballarat.

Our thanks to Lesley Brown and the Mount Elephant Community Management Inc. Committee for enabling a day of immersion in volcanic landscape and changeable weather.

Our bird list for the day (when most sensible birds had gone elsewhere) included:

Pacific black duck	*Anas superciliosa*
Chestnut teal	*Anas castanea*
Grey teal	*Anas gracilis*
Australian shelduck	*Tadorna tadornoides*
Eurasian coot	*Fulica atra*
Black swan	*Cygnus atratus*
Australian white ibis	*Threskiornis molucca*
Masked lapwing	*Vannellus miles*
Superb Fairy-wren	*Malurus cyaneus*
Black fronted dotterel	*Elseyornis melanops*
White-faced heron	*Egretta novaehollandiae*
Silver gull	*Chroicocephalus novae hollandaiae*
Little black cormorant	*Phalacrocorax sulcirostr*is

Andy Arnold also recorded a range of botanical species which he will be uploading to iNaturalist along with observation records from other members.

Report- Neville Oddie

Images Carol Hall Mt Elephant climb– Val H

Mt Elephant from Lake Tooliorook with rain shower

Excerpts from the FNCB Club Meeting Minutes 7.30pm, April 4th, 2025 Held in person and via Zoom

Opening and Apologies
Attendance: President Neville Oddie welcomed 19 members and three visitors attending in person and six members attending via Zoom.
Apologies: Alasdair Wardle, Sue Grey-Smith, Sheree Cartledge, Shirley Faull and Mark Moravec.

Guest Speaker: "Trust for Nature's history, vision and reserves" was presented by Steven Lynch, the new Director of Conservation at Trust for Nature.

Business Arising from Previous Club Meeting on March 7, 2025
- FNCB membership of South East Australian Naturalists Association was renewed.
- An order for 6 hard-copies of Susan Kruss's PhD Thesis titled "A Voice for Nature: A History of the Field Naturalists Club of Ballarat" has been placed with Whiteslaw Bindery, including a copy for the Club library and several copies ordered by members which will be partly subsidised by the Club. They should be ready for pick-up early May.

Business Arising from Correspondence:
- The opportunity to join the SEANA (South East Australian Naturalists Association) Committee as an FNCB rep. was discussed and any expressions of interest sought. In the absence of a volunteer, a representative will be appointed from the FNCB Committee.
- Discussed draft submission to the State Government on Victoria's duck-shooting season prepared primarily by Neville.

Motion: That the draft submission circulated to members on April 4 be forwarded to the State Government with some additions, namely: that the Club membership endorsed the letter at our April Club Meeting, that reference to the *National Guidelines for Migratory Birds and Wildlife*, the *Australian Strategy for Nature* and the "Rights of Nature" be made. Carried

Reminder: Please don't forget to renew your Club Membership ASAP (see page 14 for details). Please complete a Membership Renewal Form if your details have changed.

Reports:

Treasurer's Report

Opening bal. as at Mar. 7, 2025: $10,615.82
Income $1,657.06
Expenses: $274.00
Closing bal.: $11,998.88

Treasurer's DBB Income/Expenses Report
Total Income: $9,653.00 Total Expenses: $6,118.75
Current Profit: $3,534.25

Ballarat Friends Forum: No members at the Club Meeting attended. However, Judith has been accepted onto the Ballarat City Council's Biodiversity Reference Group along with members of other local environmental "friends" groups.

Let's Chat Ballarat: John P attended, intending to express his disgust at the Council's removal of funding from BREAZE (but had to refrain from because he was too upset), and hoping to catch up with Council's "Coordinator Heritage" to discuss the *Creswick Goldfield Water Distribution Heritage Precinct* heritage nomination and the Council's *Heritage Gaps Review Program*. He commended her knowledge and professionalism.

SEANA Spring Camp 2025 Update: Presented by Kathy, a member of the Organising Committee. Noted that we are well on the way to finalising the First Circular to be sent out in May to members of all SEANA-affiliated Clubs. Very basic accommodation is on offer at Pax Hill Scout Camp, the venue for event registration, dinner and guest speaker on Friday 17th Oct and for gathering to carpool/ convoy for field trips on Saturday 18th and Sunday 19th Oct. We are working to line-up field trip leaders (at this stage based on those who volunteered to lead at the SEANA 2021 Camp which was cancelled due to Covid-19). Please let Emily, Kathy, Val or Neville know if you would be willing to lead a field trip. The quality of the camp is entirely dependent on members volunteering/ sharing their time and local knowledge. Trips can be tailored by those offering to lead them.

General Business

Sunday 6th April field trip, to: "Mt Elephant and surrounds" to be led by Neville Oddie

Planning for next year's Calendar of Activities is almost complete. Please let a Committee member know if you have a suggestion for a guest speaker in May or field trip destinations and/or leaders for July or August.

Judith highlighted an upcoming event celebrating International Dark Sky Week to be held at the Lookout in Woowookarung Regional Park on Tuesday 22nd April from 5.30pm. It will include a nocturnal insect survey and the opportunity to study the night sky with equipment supplied by The Ballarat Observatory. BYO picnic tea, chair and everything else!
Other general business: Meeting visitor Laura Guest gave us an overview of the activities "Ballarat Wildlife Rehabilitation and Conservation" (BWRAC), a local organisation of which she is a member, and highlighted the broad range of opportunities to get involved. To find out more, head to their website: https://www.bwrac.org.au

Show & Tell/ Field Reports

•Les told us about the sighting of an echidna at Moorabool Reservoir on a recent BirdLife Ballarat outing, and a Black-shouldered Kite scouting above his farm in Bungaree.

•- Emily mentioned the current flowering of Sharp Midge-orchids *Corunastylis despectans*, Fringed Midge-orchids *C. ciliata* and Parson's Bands *Eriochilus cucullatus* in the Hoffmann Block at Clarkesdale Bird Sanctuary in Linton.

- Andrew G noted that Gang Gang Cockatoos had apparently relocated south to Mt Sturgeon and Dunkeld from their usual haunts further north in Gariwerd (Grampians NP) due to the extensive bushfires in the Park over summer.

•John P mentioned some highlights on a recent day trip: Union Mine and a monument to Major Mitchell at Mt Greenock- a volcanic cone dotted with Tree Violets *Melicytus sp.* (a species with very large thorns); Merin Merin State Game Reserve with its magnificent River Red Gum population where the swamp is dry at present; and Tullaroop Creek Scenic Reserve with its numerous fresh pools and flowing water cut through the volcanic rock in a confined but quite deep valley with otherwise dry surrounds. An abundance of grasshoppers and dragonflies were seen along the Creek, and the remains of the very large Joly's Bridge were worth a look too. John P also reported the sighting of a Stick Insect on a verandah in Nerrina. It was about 15cm long, probably female as no wings were visible, and it looked to have eaten large amounts of nearby rosebush leaves. No moulting was observed over four days before it disappeared.

•- Andy A also enjoyed a trip to Merin Merin State Game Reserve, finding an empty Goat Moth pupa case (*Abantiades sp.)* under a River Red Gum where the larva would have fed on the tree's roots. He had also found an empty pupa case of this species under a Red Stringybark at the Jubilee Block of Clarkesdale Sanctuary, Newtown.

•Angela A. shared a photo of a bird of prey tentatively identified as a Collared Sparrowhawk sitting on a branch in Fairyland, Lake Wendouree. Her i.d. was confirmed by Roger.
•Val reported that flowering Tiny Greenhoods *Pterostylis parviflora* and Inland Red-tip Tiny Greenhoods *P. rubescens* along with Parson's Bands Orchids were found at the Jubilee Block of Clarkesdale Bird Sanctuary (Scarsdale-Pitfield Rd) by members of the U3A Ballarat Orchid Group on 2nd April. (Emily added that the Red-tip Tiny Greenhoods are listed as Endangered under the FFG Act). Her daughter in Warragul reported about 200 fruit bats (Grey-headed Flying Foxes) in a local park this week, whilst Val first observed the same creatures at the Ballarat Botanical Gardens about three weeks ago. (They are still there).
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Next Meeting: Guest speaker TBA. Meeting closed 9.12 pm

Carol H reported that the Grey-headed Flying Foxes have been in the Botanic gardens during March and April, part of the breeding season. She could see several pairs of bats mating. Carol took this photo on Sat 5th April. Roger estimated there were about 200 bats in the trees at that time.

FNCB Membership for 2025 is now due:
Ordinary Member (Adult) $35
Family $55
Distant Member $20
Student Member $15
Newsletter Postage $16.50

Please pay as soon as possible. Direct Deposit into FNCB's bank account (details below) is the preferred payment method. You are also welcome to pay with cash or cheque at a Club meeting if you prefer. Or pay via cash or cheque at any branch of the Bendigo Bank, using the details below and ask them to include your surname as the reference.

Thank you to those members who have already paid their membership renewal for 2025.

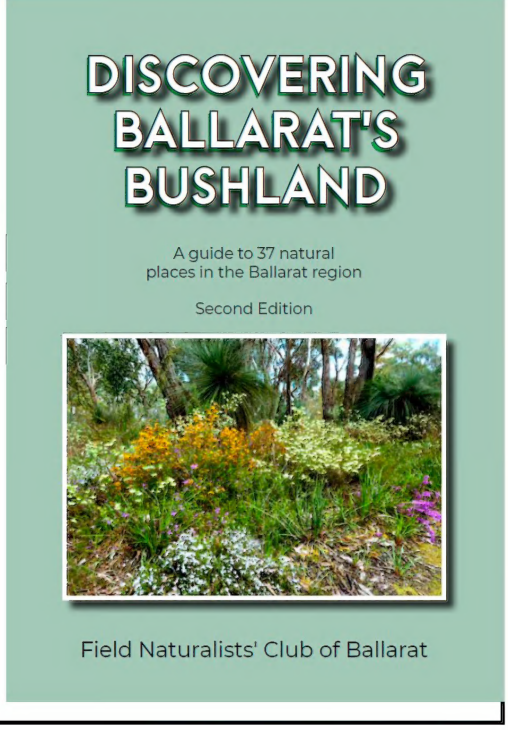
Bank Account Details:
Account Name: Field Naturalists Club of Ballarat Inc.
BSB: 633 000
Account Number: 119 112 290
Reference: Your Name

Discovering Ballarat's Bushland book sales

Books can be purchased from our Treasurer Kathy

We have also secured the help of some local outlets to sell the book. They include:- Collins Books, Lydiard St & Bridge Mall, Tourist Info Centre Sturt Street, Eureka Centre Gift Shop, Buninyong Tourist Info centre

FNCB members $10
Other FNC Members $12
Retail $15


DISCOVERING BALLARAT'S BUSHLAND
A guide to 37 natural places in the Ballarat region
Second Edition
Field Naturalists' Club of Ballarat

Ballarat SEANA 17-19th Oct We are currently recruiting leaders for our excursions. The first circular and registration forms will be sent out in May

Our next club meeting is Friday 2nd May at 7.30 pm in person and via zoom
Our guest speaker will be Simon Heyes from the Botany & Plant Ecology Research Group, LaTrobe University.
His address will be on Banksias - including seed predation and recruitment, and on the work of Friends of Forgotten Woodlands.

Can we please have a volunteer to write notes on Simon's address for the Newsletter

Sunday 4th May field trip- 9.30am – 4pm: "Ross Creek and Napoleons area" led by Elspeth Swan and Paul Norquay.

Meet at the Federation University carpark on the corner of Gillies St and Gregory St, Wendouree for carpooling (where possible) or convoy and departure at 9.30am sharp.

Stop 1 Rendezvous at the former Ross Creek General Store, Sebastopol-Smythesdale Road, at 9:50am. Drive to Bodens Water Race No. 2, off Wades Lane.

Stop 2 Ross Creek Recreation Reserve Nature Walk and lunch/toilet spot

Stop 3 Cambrian Hill Nature Reserve, Glassons Road, Napoleons

Stop 4 Franklin Bridge, Scotchman's Lead

The walking will be relatively easy but may be slippery if it rains.

Wear weather-appropriate clothes and clean, sturdy shoes. Be Sunsmart. Bring water, camera, binoculars, field guides, morning tea, lunch, thermos and camp chair. N.B.: Please bring a cash contribution for your driver if you intend to carpool.

Elspeth has kindly offered to write up a report for the Newsletter

Meetings and Excursions

Fri May 2nd Speaker Simon Heyes
Banksia research and the Friends of the Forgotten Woodlands"

Sun May 4th Leaders Elspeth Swan & Paul Norquay - Exploring Ross Creek and Napoleons areas

Future events
Fri June 6th Jenny & Peter Sedgwick *From the Shallows to the Deep End: Marine Encounters at Lady Elliot Island*
Sun June 8th Les Hanrahan - Fungi foray, location to be advised

Volunteers are needed to write up these events for our newsletter please.

Next Committee meeting Tues May 27th at 7.30 pm on zoom

Club meetings are normally held on 1st Friday of the month at 7.30 pm at the Federation Uni Gillies St Campus (corner of Gillies and Gregory Sts, Lake Wendouree),

Committee

President	Neville Oddie
Secretary	Emily Noble
Treasurer	Kathy Elder
Committee	Andy Arnold
	Val Hocking
	Sheree Cartledge
	Max Thompson
	Alasdair Wardle
	Sue Grey-Smith

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Treasurer Kathy Elder
Website: http://fieldnatballarat.wordpress.com
Club email: ballaratfnc@gmail.com
Meetings - in person and may continue to be held via Zoom.
Members will be kept informed of arrangements each month.

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